

Marsworth Parish Council - Code of Practice for Complaints against the Council

The following Code of Practice has been formulated from the framework suggested by the national association of Local councils It is designed to cover complaints against actions of the Council's staff or its administration.

Before the Meeting

1. The complainant shall be asked to put the complaint about the Council's procedures or administration in writing to the Clerk or other nominated Proper Officer. If the complainant does not wish to put the complaint to the Clerk or other Proper Officer (by reason of the complaint being about that officer, or any other reason) they are advised to put it to the Chairman. In any event, all complaints should be brought to the attention of the Chairman at the earliest opportunity.
2. The Clerk (or Chairman) will acknowledge receipt of the complaint and advise the complainant when the matter will be considered.
3. The complainant shall be invited to attend the meeting where the complaint will be heard and bring with them such representative as they wish.
4. Seven clear working days prior to the meeting, the complaint shall provide the Council with any copies of any documentation or other evidence that they wish to refer to at the meeting. The council shall similarly provide the complainant with copies of any documentation upon which they wish to rely at the meeting.

At the Meeting

1. The Council shall consider whether the circumstances of the meeting warrant the exclusion of the public and press under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960.
2. The Chairman shall introduce everyone and explain the procedure to be used in order to consider the complaint made. The meeting should be as informal and friendly as possible, without prejudicing the need to consider properly the matter under discussion.
3. (a) The complainant (or representative) shall be asked to outline the grounds for complaint and Members given the opportunity to ask any question of the complainant.
(b) If relevant, the Clerk or Proper Officer will explain the Council's position and members shall ask any question of the Clerk or Proper Officer.
(c) The complainant is to be offered the opportunity of the last word as a means of summing up their position.
(d) The Clerk or Proper Officer is to be offered the opportunity of a last word as a means of summing up their position
4. The Clerk or Proper Officer and complainant shall be asked to leave the room while members decide whether or not the grounds for complaint have been made. If a point of clarification is necessary, both parties should be invited back. In any case, both parties return to hear the decision, or to be advised when the decision will be made.
5. The announcement of any decision should be made public at the next appropriate Council meeting.

Following the Meeting

The decision shall be confirmed in writing within a reasonable time together with details of any action to be taken.